

“Doc! Hey, doc!” A patient a few cots away was beckoning to us. “Do you hear that?”

Heinrich came over. “Hear what?”

“Listen! It sounds like an airplane.”

“Are you sure it’s not the generator?” Miss Oberholtzer asked.

I shook my head. “Can’t be. The generator was shut down hours ago when we finished operating.”

The patient stabbed a forefinger into the air. “It’s an airplane. I’m sure of it.”

Miss Oberholtzer smiled at him. “It’s most likely one of ours, doing reconnaissance work.”

He struggled to sit up. “It’s a Boche plane. I heard them before when I was on the line.” He froze, his head cocked, listening.

Then I heard it, too—an oddly nasal drone that was getting louder by the second.

“He’s starting his run! Take cover! Everyone take cover!” he screamed, waving his arms.

Those who could rolled off their cots onto the floor. Heinrich, Miss Oberholtzer, and I threw ourselves across patients immobilized by Balkan frames.

*Whump! Whump! Whump! Whump!* The ground shuddered and heaved. I clamped down on the cot to keep from falling.

“He’s coming around again!”

Miss Oberholtzer stood up. “We’ve got to get these men out of here!” She grabbed the patient lying beneath her and released the tension on his leg as Heinrich and I did the same. We were headed for the door when the next bombs fell.

I awoke in the dark. I could hear voices all around but they sounded strangely muffled, as if I were under water. Someone tugged at my arm. I sat up, blinking, trying to clear my vision but something was in my eyes. The patient I’d tried to help was lying on the floor next to me. He pointed at my head and said something but I couldn’t make out his words over the roaring in my ears.

“Come on,” I said.

I rolled onto my knees and pulled his arm across my shoulders. Together we levered ourselves upright and began moving toward the door, stumbling and nearly falling as we made our way through a tangled mess of upended cots, splintered Balkan frames, and broken glass.

Our lungs and eyes burning from the reek of spilled Dakin solution, we had to stop just outside the tent. Heinrich and Miss Oberholtzer were already there, staring in shock at the devastation. The camp was a stinking ruin of smoke and flame. Men ran in all directions as fire leaped into the sky from several tents that had been flattened by the airplane’s bombs. Miss Oberholtzer pointed toward the wheat field. Heinrich and I nodded. It was as good a place to hide as any. My patient and I took off in a staggering lope only to trip over a furrow, falling headlong in the dirt. It couldn’t have been good for his wounded leg but there was no help for it.

I stuck my finger in his face. “Stay down!”

I didn’t wait for his reply but immediately headed back to the ward. The enemy’s plane, apparently out of bombs, was swooping and diving, firing his machine gun in rattling bursts at anything that moved. When I turned back to look for the plane I saw Miss Oberholtzer emerge from the wheat field, her white shirtwaist and apron a brilliant beacon in the darkness. The German pilot must’ve seen her, too, because he immediately turned and dove, firing at her as he went. Without thinking, I turned and ran back to her only to see her crumple to the ground as the bullets smacked into her body. I dropped to my knees at her side as the plane roared over us. With my hand on her shoulder I looked at her face and everything stopped as I realized her eyes

were staring at nothing. She was gone. With a shriek of anguish I couldn't hear I gathered her into my arms and ran for the ward.